

Message Text

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S E C R E T ISLAMABAD 13074

NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MNVC TECH PARM PK
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S CONVERSATION WITH PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO
ON REPROCESSING ISSUE

1. BHUTTO RETURNED FROM THE PUNJAB TO HIS CAPITAL
LAST NIGHT TO SEE ME PRIOR TO DEPARTURE EARLY TODAY
FOR KARACHI AND FROM THERE TO TEHRAN TOMORROW. IT
WAS A LONG AND I BELIEVE USEFUL TALK ALTHOUGH I WAS
NOT ABLE TO ACHIEVE, AT LEAST IN THIS FIRST GO
AROUND, THE RESULTS WE HAD HOPED FOR. IN SUMMARY,
HE IS NOT PREPARED TO CONSIDER ANY PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGED
DELAY, EVEN JOINTLY WITH THE FRENCH, PRIOR TO
HIS OWN ELECTIONS WHICH HE TOLD ME IN CONFIDENCE
(THE SYSTEM HERE IS SUCH THAT WE MUST PROTECT HIM
IN THIS) WOULD BE IN EARLY MARCH. HIS
WILLINGNESS TO MOVE AHEAD WITH SUCH AN APPROACH AT THAT
TIME WILL DEPEND, I WOULD JUDGE, ON THE
RELATIONSHIP HE IS ABLE TO ESTABLISH WITH THE NEW
ADMINISTRATION.

2. TO SHORTEN REPORTING SUFFICE IT SAY THAT I
USED ONE MANNER OR ANOTHER ALL THE USEFUL BACK-
ROUND MATERIAL AND TALKING POINTS PROVIDED ME
BEFORE I LEFT WASHINGTON. HE AT LEAST UNDERSTANDS,
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 ISLAMA 13074 251009Z

I BELIEVE FAR BETTER THAN BEFORE, THE TRENDS AND
CHANGES IN ATTITUDE OF SUPPLIER NATIONS SINCE HE
CONCLUDED HIS AGREEMENT WITH THE FRENCH. HE ALSO
UNDERSTANDS THE RATIONALE BEHIND OUR REFUSAL TO
CONSIDER ADDITIONAL U.S. APPROVED SAFEGUARDS AS
A WAY OUT, ALTHOUGH HE CANNOT ACCEPT IT COMPLETELY

AND MAY STILL CLING TO IT AS A POSSIBILITY EVEN THOUGH I TOLD HIM MY OWN CONVICTION THAT IT COULD NEVER WORK OUT THAT WAY. ALTOGETHER MY PRESENTATION CONTAINED SO MUCH FOR HIM TO ABSORB THAT IN THE EARLIER STAGES OF OUR TALK I SUGGESTED HE MIGHT WANT TO THINK ABOUT IT ALL WITHOUT FINAL DECISION ON HIS PART UNTIL WE COULD GET TOGETHER AGAIN AFTER HIS RETURN FROM TEHRAN. HE AGREED BUT YET PROCEEDED TO GIVE HIS VIEWS IN A MANNER WHICH SHOWED THAT HE HAD ALREADY FAIRLY WELL MADE UP HIS MIND BASED UPON HIS CONSIDERATION OF YAQUB'S REPORT OF HIS TALK WITH THE SECRETARY NOT TO MAKE ANY FINAL DECISION BEFORE THE PAK ELECTION.

3. BHUTTO UNDERSTANDS, AND APPRECIATES, THE DESIRE OF THE SECRETARY TO EXTEND A QUIET ROLE BOTH WITH THE FRENCH AND THE NEW ADMINISTRATION, AND EVEN TO INITIATE ACTION ON A PACKAGE DESIGNED TO HELP PAKISTAN ENORMOUSLY IN THE ECONOMIC, ENERGY AND SECURITY FIELDS PRIOR TO JAN. 20. BUT HE JUST COULD NOT, AT LEAST IN THIS FIRST SESSION, RECONCILE THIS WITH HIS OWN NEEDS, AS HE SEES THEM, OF NOT MAKING THIS ALL AN ELECTION ISSUE FOR HIMSELF IN PAKISTAN. HE MAKES THE POINT THAT WHILE THIS ISSUE BECAME A MUCH PUBLICIZED ONE ELSEWHERE IN OUR OWN PRE-ELECTION PERIOD HE REMAINED SILENT AND DID NOT TAKE ANY ACTION TO MAKE IT WORSE OR EMBARRASS US. NOW HE ASKS UNDERSTANDING OF HIS OWN PROBLEM AND POINTS OUT THAT EARLY MARCH IS NOT SO FAR AWAY ANYWAY.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 ISLAMA 13074 251009Z

RM I STILL HAVE SOME SLIGHT HOPES BECAUSE WHEN I GOT INTO SPECIFICS IT SEEMED CLEAR THAT I WAS COVERING NEW GROUND WITH HIM WHICH HE HAD NOT THOUGHT THROUGH. THESE INCLUDED THE IDEA OF A POSSIBLE JOINT STATEMENT WITH THE FRENCH ANNOUNCING DELAY (HE KNOWS IN FACT IT WOULD BE MORE THAN THAT) RATHER THAN CANCELLATION, CONVERSION OF THE REPROCESSING PLANT AGREEMENT TO AN AGREEMENT ON GUARANTEED SUPPLY OF FUEL, FABRICATION PLANT AND POWER REACTOR ALL WITH OUR HELP AND SUPPORT, PLUS U.S. BILATERAL HELP, PARTICULARLY ON SECURITY MATTERS. HE TWICE SAID THAT I WAS SUGGESTING SOMETHING NEW. I SAID IT WAS INDEED A NEW APPROACH FOR HIM TO THINK ABOUT.

5. IT WAS INTERESTING THAT HE DESCRIBED HIS

OWN PAST POSITION WITH ME AS "(1) CAST IRON SAFEGUARDS AND (2) DELAY IN BOTH STARTING AND COMPLETION." THE LATTERPOINT HE HAD IN FACT NEVER SO EXPLICITLY MADE TO ME. IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT EITHER HE KNOWS THAT NOTHING WILL IN FACT PROGRESS WITH THE FRENCH FOR AWHILE OR THAT HE HAS AGREED WITH THEM TO HOLD THINGS UP UNTIL ALL IS SOLVED ONE WAY OR THE OTHER WITH US AND OTHERS.

6. BHUTTO OF COURSE IS A REAL COOL POKER PLAYER AND HE KNOWS WITHOUT DOUBT THAT THE STAKES ARE NOW HIGH. HE MAY WONDER JUST HOW MUCH WE CAN ACTUALLY DO TOWARDS FUTURE COMMITMENTS DESPITE OUR GOOD INTENTIONS IN THE SHORT TIME LEFT WITH US IN THIS ADMINISTRATION. HE MAY REASON THAT A PART OF THAT TIME (PERHAPS A GOOD PART) WOULD BE NEEDED TO WORK OUT NEW ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE FRENCH AND HE WOULD BE TURNING ALL HIS CARDS IN THE OPEN JUST
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 ISLAMA 13074 251009Z

IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO JAN. 20 WITH NO REAL GUARANTEE OF WHAT CARDS THE NEW ADMINISTRATION HOLDS OR HOW THEY WILL PLAY THEM. HE MAY ALSO FEEL THAT HE NEEDS TIME FOR A SOBER EVALUATION OF JUST WHAT IS IN STORE OVER THE NEXT FOUR OR POSSIBLY EIGHT YEARS IN THE ALL IMPORTANT MATTER TO HIM OF U.S.-PAK RELATIONS. HE FULLY KNOWS MY VIEW THAT IT WOULD BE BEST FOR HIM TO START OUT WITH THE NEW ADMINISTRATION WITH THIS SERIOUS ISSUE OUT OF THE WAY. I BELIEVE REPEAT BELIEVE THAT HE FULLY UNDERSTANDS MY CONVICTION THAT HE MOST PROBABLY WILL NEVER GET THE REPROCESSING PLANT, BUT HE STILL HAS ALL THESE THINGS TO CONSIDER AND THERE IS ALSO THE PROBLEM OF THE ELECTIONS. WHILE WE MAY FEEL CERTAIN HE WILL WIN ANYWAY, HE REMAINS A CAUTIOUS POLITICIAN AND HE WILL RESIST STRENUOUSLY GIVING AN ISSUE AS BIG AS THIS ONE TO THE OPPOSITION IN THE NEXT TEN WEEKS.

7. WE LEFT IT THAT WE MIGHT GET TOGETHER IN LAHORE AFTER HIS RETURN FROM TEHRAN. OTHERWISE HE HAS INVITED US FOR A LENGTHY STAY AT HIS HOME IN LARKANA THE FIRST WEEK OF JANUARY WHERE HE SAID WE WOULD HAVE PLENTY OF TIME TO TALK.
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